

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



Sub Libertate Florent

September 21, 1992

President
Leo L. Beranek

Executive Officer
Joel Orlen

Vice President
Helen Vendler

*Vice President,
Midwest Center*
Nelson J. Leonard

*Vice-President,
Western Center*
Kenneth J. Arrow

Secretary
Howard H. Hiatt

Communications Secretary
Manfred L. Karnovsky

Treasurer
Elkan Blout

Editor
Stephen R. Graubard

Librarian
Frank B. Freidel, Jr.



Norton's Woods
136 Irving Street
Cambridge
Massachusetts
02138-1996 USA

Telephone:
617 576-5000

Facsimile:
617 576-5050

Vehicle Entrance at
200 Beacon Street
Somerville

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to report on the Academy's program, "The Future of America's Children," and to seek your advice and involvement. We believe that placing the alarming condition of today's children high on the Academy's agenda is in keeping with its traditional concern for the nation's well-being.

Our goal is to increase the nation's commitment to, and investment in, the nurture of children. We include among our approaches the Academy's customary roles of generating and communicating relevant knowledge. In addition, we believe that we can usefully test and, where appropriate, make more widely known new and existing information.

After consulting with members and non-members, and with planning grants from several foundations, a small steering committee has helped plan and/or launch a few model activities at a national or a community level. Examples of model projects are described in the attachment. At the moment, most participants are from the Boston area. However, the next phase of the program will be committed to developing the national configuration that is appropriate to the Academy and necessary for success.

Experts have alerted us to many activities similar to our own that are now underway and that have been carried out in the past, some with great success. Virtually all agree, however, that most have not been adequately evaluated for costs and effectiveness; that many have not been looked at with respect to possible replication; and that even the most alarming statistics concerning the status of children attract at most brief public attention and infrequently lead to appropriate action. Our children remain a tragically neglected constituency.

Therefore, we are now approaching funding agencies for support of a center at the Academy that will develop and monitor indicators that reflect the welfare of children, that will examine and publicize interventions designed to improve such indicators, and that will explore ways in which such information might be better communicated to, and appreciated by, the

public and policy makers. Several leaders from academic, business, labor, media, and political communities have expressed interest in participating in the center.

Against this background we invite you to join our effort. We ask not, of course, that you put aside your present work, but rather that you consider adding to your own agenda an activity that would address the needs of children. We hope that in so doing, many fellows will recognize the extraordinary breadth of the Academy's membership and take advantage of opportunities for collaborative efforts.

Representatives of each of the Academy's four classes will, as is customary, meet this fall to consider membership and related matters. We are adding to the agenda of each of the meetings a discussion of what members of the class are doing on behalf of children, what they might do, and how they think their disciplines and the Academy might improve the status of children.

In advance of the meetings, would you share your thoughts with the chair of your class and/or with us? The class membership committees are chaired by the following: Benjamin Widom, Class I; Susan Leeman, Class II; Harriet Zuckerman, Class III, and Loren Graham, Class IV. Letters should be addressed to the Academy office in Cambridge.

Finally, let us suggest another important potential effect of the Academy program. We hope that by adding the status of our children to our continuing agenda, the Academy will set a precedent for other American organizations. Consider the effects on our society if the American Association of Retired Persons, the Business Round Table, large and small corporations, labor unions, the Republican and Democratic parties, television networks, and a wide range of other business, political, religious, and social organizations added to their missions the betterment of America's children.

We look forward to your reactions, and hope you will want to join us.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Howard Hiatt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Howard Hiatt, for the
Committee